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Shining light into dark shadows of violence and learned helplessness: Peace education in South Korean Schools

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Abstract

The paper illustrates how a culture of violence is perpetuated and reproduced in South Korea through schooling and argues that peace education could help transform a culture of violence to a culture of peace. Critical ethnographic methods and a framework of peace education were applied to a sample of secondary schools in South Korea to argue that a disturbing culture of violence and learned helplessness was present; this comprises themes of direct and indirect violence through iljin (a group of students who are considered key perpetrators of school violence); a colonized false ideology; and resistance to social justice. More positively, findings are also used to generate possibilities for pedagogical change based on peace education – an approach that proves useful both as an analytical frame for examining peace-violence relations in education and society and as an essential pedagogy for progressing towards peace in South Korean schools.

Keywords: South Korean schools, peace education, pedagogical change, critical ethnography

Introduction

Peace education has been applied in South Korean school contexts in preparation for a future reunification with North Korea (Kang and Kwon, 2011; Synott, 2002) and to illuminate a diverse range of social issues, including, the anti-war movement (Lim, 2010), education for building peaceful citizens (Yoo and Kim, 2002; Lee, 2007), and movements for non-discrimination of women and homosexuals (Moon, 2009), etc. At the same time, many schools in South Korea have also turned to peace education in order to reduce overt school violence (e.g. Gyeonggido Peace Educational Training Institute). All of this signals an opportunity for peace education in South Korea, evidenced by the identification of the harm violence causes and a need for change, but it is much less obvious precisely *why* it is needed and *in which direction* it should be introduced in schools. This article aims to address these gaps and also argues that peace education is best used as a theoretical and analytical framework that provides a powerful means for understanding dark shadows of violence and learned helplessness in South Korean schools (as illustrated in first author et al., 2017).

One assumption underlying this research is that in order to understand the nature of peace and of peace culture, we need to learn about war and conflict and try out alternative ways to transform conflicts and wars (Salmon and Nevo, 2002). According to this view, varied social phenomena can be explained with reference to the study of peace and violence and peace can be analysed at various levels of educational engagement (Haavelsrud, 1996). In our view, peace education as an analytical framework facilitates a unique exploration of how individuals interact in society (peacefully or violently), which further enriches our

understanding of broader social issues. The constituent parts of a peace-education analytical framework as relevant to educational settings include important relationships and connections between different levels of society. This comprises interactions between micro (individual interactions which reflect socio-cultural elements) and macro levels of society (policy, social norms, ideologies etc.) as well as different ways of communication within the levels such as among students and teachers, together with overt classroom teaching and learning. This multilevel peace education framework underpins the analysis in the article, tracing connections between those levels and the kinds of communication associated with violence and peace. Also underpinning the analysis and theoretical framework is a learner-centered approach that is often adopted by peace education (Synott, 2005).

The aim is to identify root causes of violence embedded in school cultures that are casting dark shadows in South Korean schools (first author, 2015). A further aim is to ascertain ways to bring to such schools a culture of peace – to shine light on those dark shadows, so to speak, while also acknowledging that there are limits to the accomplishments of peace education initiatives in schools. This approach assumes a critical role for schools in peace education, and in this article we report findings from fieldwork conducted in high schools in South Korea for a period of one year (2012). Within this broad framework we also employ Hicks' model of peace education (discussed further below), especially its treatment of relations between violence and peace.

The article reports a critical ethnography of selected schools in South Korea. It explores important connections between a culture of violence in society (macro) and a similar culture in the selected schools (micro). The article begins with a review of the peace-education literature and an exploration of the implications of using a peace-education

analytical framework. A brief background history of South Korea follows as a way of describing the development and persistence of societal violence to contextualise subsequent findings and discussion sections concerning different kinds of violence. The article interprets data generated from a few selected schools and is not intended to represent South Korean schools more generally.

Literature review on peace education

A distinctive feature of peace education is its elusiveness (Bar-Tal, 2002). Based on underpinning educational goals, integral features of a peace educational pedagogy include conflict resolution skills, non-violence and cooperation, critical thinking, empowerment and praxis (UNICEF, 1999, Synott, 2005, Harris, 2002). Peace-education research reflects this diversity, and for the purposes of this article the focus is on research that has been conducted in schools.

Persisting themes in school-based peace education research include a number of important topics such as: restorative justice, conflict resolution, encountering cultural differences, human rights, gender inequality, pedagogy and content for the development of peacebuilding skills, knowledge and attitudes (Jones, 2006; Page, 2004). For instance, a recent study by Grau and Gracia-Raga (2017) investigated schools located in contexts of social vulnerability in Spain. This work explored the efficacy of practicing democracy in school. Deeming schools to be places of interaction between the diverse collectives of daily lives, the authors aimed - through school - to build capacity for a more cohesive, inclusive and peaceful society by creating time and space for interpersonal relationships where learning to live with others is an essential feature. Other school-based research includes (critical)

peace education in US public schools (Chubbuk and Zembylas, 2011 and Hantzopoulos 2011) and student-teacher transformations (Christopher and Talyor, 2011).

One promising trend in the literature is the idea of modelling peaceful democratic classroom practices (Harris, 2004). Learning should take place both by ‘doing’ in the sense of practical engagement and interaction and by processes of abstraction and reflection (Synott, 2005). This view promotes a pedagogical shift, stressing that both dialogical and participatory processes are necessary for developing knowledge among teachers and learners alike (Freire and Shor, 1987; Carter, 2002; Chetkow-Yanoov, 2003). Other studies have analysed peace pedagogies (Haavelsrud and Stenberg, 2012), explored peace education in the context of intractable conflicts such as in Israel and Palestine (Kupermintz and Salomon, 2005) or traced racialized hegemony and nationalist mythologies into Canadian history text books (Montgomery, 2006) for example. Whole-school approaches have also been applied to research in many diverse contexts (Bajaj, 2009; Bekerman, 2009; Grau and Gracia-Raga, 2017; Hantzopoulos, 2011).

Incorporating Hick’s (1988) model into a peace education theoretical framework

A critical pedagogy has been emphasized in some recent ‘critical’ peace education (Diaz-Soto, 2005). This prioritizes the generation of knowledge about ‘how participants can cultivate a sense of transformative agency’ (Bajaj, 2008: p. 135) and often advocates a holistic endeavor, giving equal attention to form, content, and structure towards more peaceful and just societies (Galtung, 2008). Critical pedagogy¹ targets structural violence to

¹ Critical pedagogy engages educators in a critical, dialectical examination of how power relations (particularly those connected to the construction of knowledge) operate in schools and society, and then equips teachers and students to become transformative democratic agents who recognize, challenge, and tra

offer a promising antidote to oppression in the form of racism, violence, social injustice (Chubbuck and Zembylas, 2011) and gender inequality for example (Reardon, 1988; Yarwood and Weaver, 1988; Tibbitts, 2016). In the current article, we attempt to explore direct and structural violence and its reflection in schools. We also incorporate Hicks' model of peace education into the broader peace-education theoretical framework because the model describes how peace and violence relate to one another.

In early peace-education discourse, violence is understood in two ways: *direct*, such as personal assault, riot, terrorism and war; and *indirect* (structural), such as poverty, hunger, discrimination and apartheid (Hicks, 1988). However, for Hicks (1988), peace and violence are related in a cycle, each affecting the other. He equates the absence of structural violence to positive peace and he considers the absence of direct violence to be negative peace. These four categories are not separate but influence one another. For present purposes, this provides a holistic lens for tracing different levels of the interrelated forces of peace and violence with regard to the selected schools in South Korea. This circularity of peace and violence shows that conflicts frequently occur in periods of peace. Hence, understanding peace also involves learning about war and conflict in our living society (Johnson & Johnson, 2003). The peace-education analytical framework underpinning this article therefore involves looking at the causes of conflict and war in order to generate educational solutions to counteract the war system towards peace systems (Ardizzon, 2003).

A further implication of this framework involves the inclusion of a *pedagogic shift* from a more theoretical peace-education discourse (Ashton, 2007). If education is the key for building democratic societies where individuals can actualize their potential, then that

education needs to resist reproducing the ideology of the privileged – admittedly a tall order. In summary, our broad theoretical framework, incorporating Hicks’s model, is both practical and critical. It is practical because it is aimed at tangible changes in education, and it is critical in attempting to uncover and overturn oppressive violence in all of its forms in South Korean schools. This also relates to Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1977; 1989), including the reflexivity of subjects in classrooms (Bourdieu, 1977) as sources of both oppression and possible emancipation.

Research method

The field of peace education and peace research has witnessed an increase in post-modern or post-structural approaches (cf. Kester and Cremin, 2017). The present study, exploring connections between peace and violence has some similarity with these, especially a critical ethnographic approach that involves examining culture, knowledge and action with a view to changing it (Thomas, 1993). Our main concern, however, is to achieve profound *changes* in South Korean society and to represent a *voice* for the marginalised in schools. Critical researchers often challenge the status quo, trying to connect the meaning of a situation to broader structures of social power and control and ask difficult questions (Carspecken, 1996).

Critical ethnography and peace education have much in common. Peace education also aims to lead conflicted societies towards social transformation. A peace-education perspective views the world as comprising exploitative and oppressive relations and highlights the value of human subjects. Similarly, critical ethnography views the school as an institution in which a culture of violence can perpetuate, and advocates hearing the voices of students and teachers in order to identify oppression and offer suggestions for transformation.

The research discussed in this article relates mostly to ethnographic findings from one particular school (Dream high school)², but we also draw to a lesser extent on data from three other South Korean schools. Three classes were chosen at Dream high school where the first author spent 8 months conducting observations (see Table 2). Interviews and qualitative questionnaires also formed part of the research design, including the ‘draw-and-tell’ method (Williams, 2013). Iljin - as troublemakers - feature a lot in what follows and were selected for study first by belonging to the school and second based on observations about who was considered a troublemaker in the classroom - Iljin is a common school term, used for self and other definition.

When interpreting the data, we drew on a number of different sources from Doo middle school, Momo girls’ high school and Joy high school students, including letters of self-introduction, planning notes, official documents, photographs of the schools and textbooks. -Dream high school is described in detail below as is basic information for the other schools.

(Table 2 here (end of article))

Understanding the research context

In line with the theoretical framework and in order to understand macro-micro relations in the context of schools in South Korea, a brief history of South Korea is in order. Experiences of war, colonialization, and dictatorship relate to violence, directly, structurally and symbolically but especially in terms of the perpetuation of a ‘war culture’ (Kaldor, 2006). While positive influences do exist in the history of South Korea, our concern is with the reach into schools of

² The names of the schools are pseudonyms.

a culture of violence as related to a largely conflicted history (cf. first author, 2015).

South Korea's long history of violence is persisting because violence has become normal, concealed and perpetuated in many institutions, including schools, potentially leading to social violence. During the last century, South Korea has experienced multiple conflict-ridden situations, spanning politics, economics, culture, society and education. As summarised in Table 1, key periods for South Korea include countless radical and dramatic changes during a relatively short period of history. Throughout this period, a culture of violence has been tolerated (Ham, 2003; Kang, 2002; Kim, 2012) in order to enhance economic development - an aim that certainly seems to have been achieved (Kim, 2001). But in the process, South Korean society has learned to accept conflicts somewhat uncritically rather than learning how to cope with them peacefully (Kang, 2010). In addition, South Korea faces new phenomena of globalization and multiculturalism. Other persevering characteristics are also to be found in this period of rapid change, including a *mandatory military system for all men* who are citizens of South Korea and *National Security Law* that enables citizens to sue each other for being communist. During each of the distinct historical periods (see Table 1), schools had important roles, especially in terms of promoting the reigning system and its associated ideologies towards a declared purpose of securing the countries' well-being and growth.

(Table 1 here)

Schools included in the research study are, of course, located within this broad historical context and it is to those schools that we now turn. One school, Dream high school

located in the north-west side of Seoul, claims to ‘nurture students to become creative global citizens through personality and intelligence’. The school used to separate classes by gender. In 2012 it adopted mixed gender classes, but continued to separate classes for students with special needs. Similar to other South Korean schools, students remain in their classrooms while teachers move rooms as timetables dictate, otherwise staying in their offices. Students leave their classrooms for Physical Education, break and lunch. Classes for Art, English and Mathematics are arranged according to ability.

A teacher named Bongsu acted as a gatekeeper for the research, enabling snowball sampling and access to other research participants in Dream high school. (In order to protect anonymity, all names of informants and schools used in this article are pseudonyms). Bongsu is a member of the Korean Teachers’ Union (KTU), which was established in 1989³. His specialist area is Korean history. In 2012 he did not have a tutorial class.

(Table 3 here)

(Table 4 here)

Data were generated from classroom observations, interviews with students and teachers as well as from field notes that were written throughout, but especially during observations. Interviews were conducted both in individual and group formats depending on available time and individual preferences. Data analysis involved reconstructive analysis, beginning with a thematic coding approach, followed by low-level coding and then high-level coding.

³ This organization was considered illegal until ex-president Kim Daejung legalized it in 1999. In the intervening years, many teachers were dismissed. Bongsu has also been dismissed for being a member of the KTU.

Findings and discussion

According to other published work based on these ethnographic data (first author et al. 2017), there is disturbing evidence that violence is being perpetuated through various cultural elements of everyday school life and that violence is also symbolized and institutionalized in key school processes, further exacerbated by authoritative school management and increasingly atypical employment structures. These negative forces have been labelled ‘dark shadows’ (cf. first author et al. 2017). Many findings from the ethnographic study that are set out and discussed in the present section and article also highlight this culture of violence and learned helplessness in the participating schools. More positively, however, evidence is also available from across these data to support the idea that a culture of violence and helplessness in schools can be progressed towards one of peace. Before exploring these more hopeful possibilities, we refer to first-hand accounts from the pupils to show how violence is manifest in its different forms in the participating schools. Findings and an interpretive discussion are presented simultaneously in this section.

Direct and indirect violence through iljin

‘Iljin’ is a local name for a group of young troublemakers involved in school violence. *Iljin* lexically means a group of military personnel – ‘a squad’ or a pro-Japanese orientation. It is a term commonly used in these ways in school contexts. Iljin form a culture, known locally as the culture of iljin. Iljin can be divided into two high school groups – ‘graduated’ and ‘active’. Graduated iljin’s maintain friendships with active iljin during breaks when teachers are not around but do not smoke in schools. Less overtly resistant, graduate iljin are proud to avoid school allocated penalty points in contrast to active iljin who, being more

clearly resistant, are prepared to risk exclusion from school by accumulating penalty points.

On the basis that peace and violence are two sides of the same coin, school observations and interviews suggest that cultures of violence in classrooms are formed and further symbolized as *the culture* of the school. Throughout the interviews, it seemed as if direct violence in school did not attract general social consequences, except that some *iljin* offended other students.

The culture of *iljin* can be traced also to the military. Many boys seemed to think about army service. For instance, graduate *iljin*, Namsoon, talked about giving penalty points to students with tattoos. He said these students should be punished: “even the Army forbids tattoos because they are repulsive”. Not only this, boys in Dream high school said during a class game: ‘Let’s make military discipline’. Without thinking, some teachers even said: ‘Oh, dear, the military discipline has been relaxed in this class!’ Also, in Doo middle school, some students were heard calling their friends: ‘You Red! You idiot!’⁴ when their friends behaved oddly. This shows that students uncritically use the terms ‘North Korea’ and ‘the Red’ depicting disliked individuals as the enemy. The intention of such metaphors is to be mildly playful or to warn students, but is suggestive of deeply ingrained military practices that are infused in daily lives.

Additionally, the legacy of a colonial mentality still influences everyday life and may be described as ‘direct violence and militarism’ because the historical background of Japanese colonization in South Korea links closely with militaristic imperialism (Ham, 2003; Lee, 2005) as well as male chauvinism (i.e. patriarchal ideology) (Yarwood and Weaver,

⁵ The student’s Human Rights Ordinance was issued in 2010 in Gyunggi province and was extended to other provinces and major cities in South Korea. For instance, Seoul announced the Ordinance in 2012. Among other issues, the Students’ Ordinance for Human Rights has prohibited corporal punishment.

1988). From observations and interviews, we suggest that the *iljin* in Dream high school unconsciously reflected patriarchal militarism. First, when *iljin* used abusive language, they tended to feminize things by putting ‘nyun (bitch)’ at the end of each word. Both girls and boys used such feminized words. It is interesting that boys often call each other ‘nyun’ in order to make friends feel worse. Although they were unreflectively using such language, it had a negative effect on those hearing it. In the following quotation, the first author asks the pupils about this.

First author: Yes, I wanted to ask you... You guys use a lot of cuss words, honestly. Right? But why do you put ‘nyun (bitch)’ at the end, even if you are cussing each other?

Jungho: If we say ‘Nom’ (dude) we don’t feel that’s bad, but if we hear ‘Nyun’ we get really mad.

First author: So, you do it to make people feel worse?

Jungho: when we say, ‘hey, you crazy guys’ and when we say, ‘hey, you crazy bitch!’ ... doesn’t it sound different?

Giduck: If someone says, ‘hey you crazy guy!’ then we say, ‘oh, yeah, why?’ but if one says, ‘hey, you crazy bitch!’ then we feel like ... shit! (interview_20120620_Jihoonetc_students)

Iljin girls uncritically do the same as the boys and seem unaffected even when their boyfriends use sexually abusive language with them. For instance, Junghyun enjoyed such jokes about having sex when Heungsoo teased her by saying, ‘Oh, dear, you said you wanted to sleep with me?’ (see Davis (2004) and Reardon (1988) for feminist aspects of peace education).

The hierarchical system of *iljin* itself resembles that of the military. Relations between senior and junior *iljin* are oppressive and hierarchical. Seniors can physically attack juniors if they wish, seniors can force juniors to buy expensive things and force them to steal, and seniors can call juniors together in a group at any time. In return, seniors will fight for juniors if others harass them. This is a politics of co-existence. *Iljin* do not use ‘stars’ to indicate their power and position, but according to teachers, Jungho and Igyung, their physical power decides their position in a group. An example of the control of material

possessions follows.

First author: Okay, let me ask you this. Did you guys ever get robbed by your seniors?

All: Of course....

Jihoon: Beaten and robbed.

Giduck: They took cigarettes.

First author: Right ... but why did they beat you?

Jihoon: My seniors were quite strange. They'd say, 'Come on, hold on to the wall' then, Puck, Puck, Puck!

First author: No reason?

Jihoon: No. And they go, 'Sell these clothes. If you can't, give us your money!'

Jungho: In our area, there is a guy who is the god of compulsory purchase. Our senior, who's like that ... he calls me. 'Hey, Jungho' He speaks very nicely. And suddenly he asks, 'Have you had dinner?' Then I can sense that. 'Oh, shit!' [Laugh] I answer, 'Yes, I have.' 'Right. Well, I have ... 700. Will you buy it?' It is when the series of 700, 800 of Northface padding was popular. I told him that I didn't have any money. But he just says, 'buy it' and then he hangs up. [First author: Did you have to buy it then?] We had no other choice but to buy. And when we were in the second grade of middle school, we sort of got interested in riding a motorbike. Seniors call us and we can see that this motorbike is out of order. But they ask us, 'Hey, guys, will you buy it?' 'No, we don't have the money.' 'Well, make 20,000 won by tomorrow!' If we don't make it, 'Okay, we will give you two weeks, make 20,000 won by then!' If we do make that amount, we give them the money and take that broken motorbike with us. (interview_20120620_Jihoonetc_students)

As said earlier, the word *iljin* symbolizes those who were pro-Japanese and traitors to their country. Mirroring this, teachers and good students symbolize *iljin* as *peace-breakers* in class. For teachers, *iljin* are people whose morality and social capabilities are poorly formed and they have a negative impact on classes. Good students are scared of them, owing to their power and threat of explicit violence, yet they look down upon *iljin* as losers with no real notion of what they are doing. Good students generally accept that being orderly and compliant is socially required and so by the time of high school this is an expected norm, including obeying teachers. However, *iljin* also show strong compliance to their seniors but look down on teachers who cannot physically 'beat' them. Hence, good students think the *iljin* are contradictory in this way. In the school context, many say *iljin* are like pro-Japanese traitors, who were also considered mean and half-witted. This suggests a persisting association between pro-Japanese tendencies and negativity, even when there is no obvious

connection with Japanese policies.

Notwithstanding these accounts of direct violence, indirect violence has a more critical role in school culture. After corporal punishment was banned (it was blamed as a root cause of school violence), the current system is almost as bad because it involves a relationship between teachers and students that is hierarchal and oppressive, despite claims that teachers' authority dwindled without corporal punishment. As discussed earlier, military culture remains valid in forming classroom cultures and is uncritically and unconsciously infused into the cultures of students and teachers. A peace-education theoretical framework points to a need for the dissection and diagnosis of these different forms of indirect violence, since they are interrelated.

School violence and colonized false ideologies

We have argued that indirect and symbolic violence infused into school life plays a much stronger role in forming school culture than does direct violence. In fact, the root causes of school violence blend with various ideologies, power relations and cultural dynamics of wider society. Some ideologies typically symbolized in South Korea as “right”, “common” and “realistic” ought to be seen as *colonized false ideologies*. The first author introduced this term to explain the peculiar situation of South Korea (first author, 2015).

These ideologies are ‘*colonized*’ because South Korea’s peculiar situation plays out by partially constructing the consciousness of the individual, often through educational or other institutionalized apparatus. Such ideology regularly reflects ruling class culture and norms, yet in South Korea the ideology of the ruling class is somewhat distorted, reflecting much of its colonial past. To illustrate, the relationship between the dominator and dominated

in post-colonial societies was reset after the colonization period. Therefore, ideologies of the dominator (high classes of such societies) are based not only on economics but also on their unique view of history and of the world. For instance, '*False*' also accounts for an ideology that brings people to falsely believe that they are progressive and emancipated, just because they are no longer in the grip of a colonial force, thus hiding from their own consciousness the extent to which they have become the new power holders. Overall, school is a symbolic place for perpetuating these *colonized false ideologies*.

Colonized false ideologies create indirect violence which is even stronger and more effective than direct violence in preserving the history of colonization, war and dictatorship in combination with new ideas about democracy, capitalism, neo-liberalism and globalization. For example, it is noteworthy how *human rights* became a political ideology in South Korean education. Issues of human rights ought to be central to any discussion of peace education (UNESCO, 1945), and involve claiming universal values and rights in democratic societies. However, for South Korean schools, 'human rights' took on a life of their own as they became a cultural and political ideology when the progressive authorities brought up the issue of students' human rights by introducing the so called Ordinance.⁵ Thus, human rights in schools became, above all, a political hobby-horse of the progressive parties. Meanwhile, teachers and students feel frustrated about how to handle this in their classroom, causing conflict and misunderstanding.

Samjae: You know, Menboong (mental breakdown) ... Because academic high schools are traditionally places of study, but their general atmosphere has collapsed. For example, 95%-100% of the students who cannot even qualify for vocational high school enter academic high school, but they show little inclination to study. And, we have no special programmes for them. They have no interest

⁵ The student's Human Rights Ordinance was issued in 2010 in Gyunggi province and was extended to other provinces and major cities in South Korea. For instance, Seoul announced the Ordinance in 2012. Among other issues, the Students' Ordinance for Human Rights has prohibited corporal punishment.

in studying. Only in putting on make-up and doing other things and sleeping ... This is the real situation. We have to teach classes that include those students. In the past we could use corporal punishment and so on, but now we can't because of the enforcement of the Students' Ordinance for Human Rights. So we have no way of controlling them. So students now think that they can do whatever they want. As Lee said, responsibilities should accompany rights, but students have no sense of this ... They omit selectively ... like duty, and so on. It's difficult for teachers to handle this problem. (interview_20121121_6&7_teachers)

In this situation, students' human rights were symbolized as a way to break school rules. Teachers tended to blame the Ordinance for breaking down their authority. Teachers said that it made students in general more violent and impolite. Surprisingly, good students complained that teachers looked inadequate because they could not control trouble-makers. It is interesting that such students have been misled into thinking that human rights are the representative concern of the Ordinance only and are to blame for failures because teachers may no longer use corporal punishment to control students. Good students thus think that the *iljin* behave badly because they are no longer afraid of teachers. This is a feasible reason because important human-rights ideals have been watered-down and misrepresented in the schools and reduced to a system of penalty point sanctions, viewed locally as a poor replacement for corporal punishment.

Ironically, as human rights became a common ideology in schools, teachers and students were symbolically forced to give up their basic rights of self-expression in the belief that exerting them disturbed the original school order and threatened the security and peace of the class.

First author: I talked with some students and they told me that corporal punishment is much better than the penalty system...

Saeyoung: I agree with them. Our society tries to shrink the power of teachers while expanding the rights of students and parents. I don't mean that these are wrong. But in the process of making it materialise, people who have no idea of the situation – administrative workers – planned and imposed it on us, typically top-down. Since it is very oppressive, the gap between the reality and the policy is getting wider and wider. I would argue that the meaning of corporal punishment is not about the right to hit students but about the right to discipline them. Teachers do not hit students mechanically.

Corporal punishment sort of symbolizes to students that teachers are the ones who can discipline them. But this symbol has been taken away (by the government), so now we [control students] mechanically. So the traditional affection between teachers and students disappears, we just give out penalty points automatically. (Interview_20121121_Multiculture_teachers)

Accordingly, students now think wrongly that corporal punishment (direct violence) is far better for their educational success than the penalty point system (indirect violence). Teachers agree with them and some have argued that human rights, as Western values, conflict with traditional values. We suggest that all of these beliefs stem from the ideology of human rights being falsely represented and then scapegoated in schools.

Resisting social justice

Social justice is about equal power relations at individual, local and global levels (Hicks, 1988). It involves building knowledge, attitudes and skills to think about others and wider society for a common good. However, the emphasis of competition and of studying-for-the-sake-of-economic-benefits in combination with unresolved war and colonial issues, means that students are trained to value success (usually merely economic) and winning (cf. First author et al., 2017) as the sole instrumental goals of schooling, in the absence of any concerns about intrinsic values. Present authors have previously described this as a ‘*compete and study*’ ideology’ that is also implicated in student (and teacher) tendencies to accept social injustice (First author et al., 2017). But social justice happens to be one of the critical values underlying peace (Hicks, 1988). As a consequence, some good students cherish the penalty point system as ‘just’ because they rarely get such points, whereas the *iljin* will, in the end, be expelled from school (interview_20160613_OhGaeunGaeNari).

Good students came to believe that *iljin* should be expelled from school based on the idea of exclusion. Students are trapped in a ‘compete and study’ ideology, and so good

students believe that they should study for the future by winning against others. They take it for granted that those who interrupt values of competition and study should be punished and / or removed. In order to legitimate these beliefs, good students regard *iljins* as losers who behave foolishly and oddly. This kind of thinking justifies expelling them from class.

Gaeun: I think the definition of loser in high school is a bit different from middle school.

First author: Really? How?

Gaeun: Well, in middle school, we are young and childish. So we think losers are those who only study and care nothing for friends ... but now we think that losers are those who show off in class ... there are many immature students, even in high school. Those who think the class is their world, like when we were elementary students.

First author: How do they behave in class, for example?

Gaeun: Haha, well, they behave as they want ... well, we ought to be polite to teachers, right? Then they [students] should at least conform, but when they feel bad they just do whatever they want.

Nari: They just insist on having their own way.

Gaeun: There are a lot of students who behave like that.

First author: I see.

Gaeun: [In middle school], we thought we should not mess with them, because they are quite scary. But now ... when I see them ... I think about ... what will they do when we graduate?

Nari: I think they are stupid. (interview_20120613_OhGaeunGaeNari_students)

Institutionalized inequality perpetuating school violence

Inequality is exacerbated both symbolically and directly by unconsciously denying diversity. From our observations, it was clear to see how intolerance was internalized and institutionalized in class. First of all, students had not learned to deal with difference, nor were they taught to think about social justice or given experience of talking about controversial issues. Despite all primary schools being mixed, the boys and girls encountered in Dream high school seemed to have no understanding of each other as equals. In their interviews, boys – trouble-makers in particular – showed hatred and anger towards girls. Similarly, girls appeared not to understand boys' culture and some of the girls seemed likely to accept it if their boyfriends had power among the *iljin*. Girls may have heard of gender equality but did not know how to have equal relationships. The old patriarchal system pervades – boys did not try to understand girls' and thought them strange, while girls had

difficulty understanding boys, but somehow accepted the situation and tried to become involved by having boyfriends.

Herim: I always solve problems if Eunji has any. Hyungjoon asked Eunji for a date. But Eunji said she had a boyfriend. Then Hyungjoon proposed that she should cheat on the boyfriend for a week. Then if Eunji felt that her boyfriend was better than Hyungjoon, he would let her go. Unfortunately, Eunji's boyfriend saw this ... he caught Eunji and beat her to a pulp. And then Hyungjoon caught Eunji and beat her to a pulp.

First author: What do you mean by beat her to a pulp? Do you mean that they really beat her?

Herim: No, no. between boys, beat is done on the phone and to Eunji they sent katalak⁶ messages.

Hyungjoon is really scary and he knows a lot of seniors in our school.

(interview_20120620_KimHerim2_students)

Even though gender inequality is obscured because on the face of it, boys and girls receive the same education, girls - especially trouble-makers - are attached to boys in condescending ways. For example, sexually harassing jokes are accepted as normal. This reflects the superficial nature of gender equality in South Korea, which affords equal opportunity to girls and boys in principle alone. Individuals have not learned how to treat basic human differences, tolerate them or question an old male-centred system and macho culture. Consequently, inherent relationships between social consciousness and individual development need to be explored in order to bring about a culture of peace (Harris and Morrison, 2003).

Shining light into dark shadows of violence and helplessness: Achieving pedagogical change through peace education

It is insufficient to change teaching methods alone since change must occur at the level of core educational philosophy as well as through the various pedagogical mechanisms.

⁶ A messenger application in smart phones, free for those who can access the internet. People can send messages like text messages and can also chat with it. South Koreans call it 'katalak'.

Realistically, individual change is only achievable through institutional change rather than attempting to ‘fix’ individual children who have gone astray (Bourdieu, 1977).⁷

Like students, teachers play a role in promoting a culture of violence under strong control mechanisms in the school system. How do students learn to adapt to such cultures without questioning them? According to teachers, it is a matter of values, both caught and taught, and the socialization of students. The teachers in our research blamed a number of factors, especially a dominating culture of competition that was being fostered and reconstructed in the classroom. Above all, however, the teachers criticized the current school system and the influence of neo-liberalism and excessive individualism. From their different points of view, teachers recognised problems in the current system. In order to effect change, the teachers said that more cooperative activities should occur in schools to socialize students and develop their personalities. Although these teachers may not reflect deeply on their own teaching styles, they at least valued cooperation as the essence of school life. Moreover, some mentioned the retrieval of the Korean traditional value of *chung* – empathy and affection – to overcome cultures of violence.

At lunch one day with some teachers, including Wonro and Bongsu, Wonro was curious about my (first author) study in the UK and asked, ‘Are schools in the UK free? I was a bit embarrassed but I sensed what kind of answer they expected. So I cautiously replied, ‘Yes, in terms of wearing uniforms, hair-styles ... I think they are free, but I am not quite sure about the whole education system.’ Then he and the other social studies teacher started to discuss Confucian ways of thinking and *chung*, the value of sharing. Wonro said, ‘Western values are based on individualism and their religion; they conflict with our traditional values.’ The social studies teacher said that current schooling is a Western system, so it is bound to conflict with Korean traditional values. They somehow linked the values of human rights and the penalty points system to a Western value system. Therefore, they criticized the encouraging of students’ human rights in schools as the creation of a formal system without *chung*. They find it ‘not humane at all.’ (fieldnote_20120405)

As a social studies teacher told us during a lunch break, the origins of the school

⁷ This is not intended here as a criticism of what is typically known as ‘character education’ as distinct from citizenship education or peace education, but is simply meant as a reminder that character education needs to be geared towards the character/ethos of the school as well as that of individual students.

system lie in a Western system which has been modified through South Korea's unique history. That it conflicts with some traditional understandings of education is therefore unsurprising. According to this teachers' view, *chung* could be at the core of an overarching change from a culture of violence to a culture of peace. Advancing this idea of local-values-as-builders-of-peace-culture, teachers pointed out that gradual changes of pedagogy can renew value systems in schools towards the transformation from cultures of violence to cultures of peace.

In order to change the existing climate of teaching, we argue, as some teachers in Dream high school did, that school practices ought to be freed from various control mechanisms. These control mechanisms block the way to a culture of peace because they depend on oppressive and authoritative relationships. This is demonstrated by learning processes that employ indoctrination and parrot learning and which expect the regurgitation of mass knowledge in examinations. Teacher reflections on control mechanisms led them to rethink the issue of controlling students, discipline and approaches to teaching – pedagogical change, in other words.

Nanhee: I disagree about basing the method of punishment on results. If we install CCTV or bring school police to resolve bullying problems? Well ... we should punish students for misbehaviour ... but ... you know there is a culture. I think ... we should reflect on how that culture has been created ... I think we need to explore how this culture was created, how we can change it ... For example, if we have a subject-class system, the problem of bullying shrinks ... Then, I think, more importantly, activities – group activities – should be encouraged. In the past, we had poetry exhibitions prepared by students ... and class chorus tournaments, athletic events and ... home-making and suchlike. All these activities make students do things together and resolve problems together ... I think this is really needed. (interview_20121127_YooNanhee_teachers)

Saeyoung: Well, my opinion is ... high schools now ... the awareness of present high school students in South Korea is ... but at the high school level we should not control our students. They all grew up and learned their rights and duties as they went through middle school ... so we should not control them as they were controlled in primary and middle school. So, I think having a form tutor for each class should be abolished. Teachers should teach only their subjects ... and we should have obligatory subjects and a wide range of cultural and liberal studies ... just like university students ... students should have freedom to choose the subjects they would like to study. (interview_20121121_Multiculture_teachers)

The reigning pedagogy should be changed to annihilate existing control mechanisms still deeply embedded in the school system. In this respect, teachers in Dream high school talked about building solidarity within the local community. This may seem rather simple-minded, but we maintain that it involves schools reducing their power and communicating with other members of the community such as parents, social workers, etc. about educating students.

Saeyoung: We should work together with local communities; we should think how to embrace them. This is the re-establishment of communities. For this purpose, schools should be smaller ... now they are too big ... and schools should be free of central authority. With their own autonomy ... schools will naturally ask local communities to help. Because schools answer to central government, teachers are kept busy with paperwork ... schools should be freed from central government and work together with parents and locals ... For example, why should central government have the right to select students? Schools should have it. Then we can work with parents and local communities. (interview_20121121_Multiculture_teachers)

Although there are recent policy-level trials to rebuild school-community relationship (e.g. Gyunggi-province projects on innovative schools and education community), schools remain physically isolated from local communities. Culturally, the population tends to think that educating children is the teachers' job. It is common to differentiate school education from family education and to believe that schools have sole responsibility for children's education, both in terms of gaining knowledge and for building moral character.

In these circumstances, teachers have responsibility and power over students and parents. Despite the modern view that parents are consumers of education and teachers are employees of the school, teachers retain some power over parents in the education system. In this regard, building solidarity between schools and local communities implies a much stronger message: change the current school system and the relationship among students,

parents and teachers equally.

Working with the local community in these ways is likely to invite a culture of peace (the absence of both direct and indirect violence) because it requires a non-watered-down human rights-based understanding, rooted in the values of social justice and equality. For instance, in order to build solidarity, schools should open their doors to local people and overcome an historical status imbalance between the general population and teachers that hinders the coming together of teachers and locals (especially parents) in the interests of the children. More recently, the importation of a market-economy to school culture is reversing this dynamic; teachers have lost their traditional authority over parents. Unequal relations between teachers and parents are tantamount to inequality among participants in education and can lead to socially unjust decisions in school settings, such as those involving the expulsion of students. It follows that closer working with the local community will lead to more social justice and equality.

This creates the conditions for a non-militarized culture for students. This may seem rather optimistic, but we claim that solidarity in education implies an equal relationship among its participants. Thus, unless the culture of violence that has been discussed is critically and holistically challenged, solidarity for education will not be effective. At the same time, individuals cannot transform the culture of violence to a culture of peace by themselves. If a culture of peace involves valuing others through respect, care, understanding and by learning and thinking about social justice, human rights and so on, collaborative actions are necessary in which agents interact with other agents. This is why teachers in Dream high school think that in education, building solidarity with external partners is crucial. They believe that local communities are vital because this is where students spend

their time outside of school. All of these ideas are fundamental to the pedagogy of peace education.

Finally, as Toh (2004) points out, inner peace is crucial for linking wider violence and conflict to individual experiences. This implies that we can think about peace for others only when we are at peace ourselves. In terms of teacher–student relations, it should be teachers who are most concerned about pedagogy, explicitly and implicitly. It follows as reasonable that teachers should strive to be personally peaceful in order to change current relationships and modes of communication with students.

Unfortunately, teachers are also trapped by the various control mechanisms in school and become in some respects agents of a culture of violence. This is why we argue that teachers feel as much controlled as they control their students – they feel that their basic duty to educate children is violated by the system. To resolve this, they need first to learn how to tolerate differences, emotionally and logically, through sensitivity training and similar strategies. Achieving a culture of peace in South Korean schools should start with teacher training which can equip teachers with sensitive education, training and practical strategies; thus teacher training needs to be changed as well. Hopefully, this would help teachers realize what is necessary to create a culture of peace. Additionally, they may be inspired to imagine effective ways of achieving this. This is the pedagogical aspect of the necessary transformation.

Overall, we have discussed aspects of pedagogy as the essential means for achieving peace - an argument that also assumes that peace education needs to be both symbolically and practically oriented if it is to be successful in South Korean schools where violence probably prevails if those schools are anything like the schools visited for this research.

Conclusion

Focused on selected schools, this critical ethnographic case study is not generalizable to the whole of South Korean education. However, involving an exploration of micro-macro relationships, cultures of violence, daily school observations and interviews with teachers and pupils, the research contributes an important account of how violence as a culture was being generated and reproduced in these specific school(s) and how cultures such as these constitute fruitful targets for peace education.

Our analysis shows how a culture of violence was being symbolically legitimated as a mainstream culture in the schools, but at the same time how it offers possibilities for changing school culture, especially through pedagogy. Above all, however, interrelations between direct and indirect violence needs to be emphasized, something that is especially prominent in terms of a *colonized false ideology* - a concept that expounds a persisting colonial mentality among dominated people who can be deluded to believe they are progressive and emancipated because they are physically and economically independent.

Peace education ought to tackle these post-colonial features of existing systems and values. Moreover, even though South Korean peace education seems to emphasize reunification education, people rarely conceptualize South Korea as a conflict/post-conflict area, viewing it instead as a developed country. In reality, South Korean society combines these characteristics. The root causes of violence incorporate aspects of direct and indirect violence in the form of a *colonized false ideology*. Unfortunately, this ideology writes off general peace education as an alien Western value and replaces it with a narrow and parochial conception. Even so, general peace education remains relevant in South Korean schools because it promotes a holistic and critical stance towards violence that transcends individual

societies while also taking account of their unique histories and characteristics.

Change from a violent culture to a peace culture requires transformation at the individual and school level and requires a new *pedagogy*. Teachers support this idea. The research shows that a culture of violence and learned helplessness in these South Korean schools was routinized by students and teachers who cast dark shadows over themselves. These findings were generated from a peace-education theoretical framework intended to explore violence-embedded culture in schools, and the possibility of change towards peace. Adopting such a framework - including emphasis on peace-violence interrelations - revealed practical ways to effect change in the selected schools. There is need for light in the dark shadows of violence and learned helplessness in the selected schools and probably beyond.

Table. 1 Historical transition of South Korea

Period	Event	Purpose and the role of school/ education	Main Social ideology	Impact
Colonial regime 1910-1945	Japanese colony	Western style education introduced Enlightening the people of Korea Homogenize Korean people and prepare them for the war	Colonialism Warfare	Beginning of militarized education
The end of the Second World War	Independence The influence of the USA and the USSR		North – Communism/ South – Capitalist democracy (Galtung, 1985) Warfare <i>Pro-USA</i> mindset among people in the South	Division and provide the very cause of the Korean War

<p>The end of Korean War/ President Lee Seungman – President Roh Taewoo (1953-1994)</p>	<p>Dictatorship National Security Law Mandated military system Japanese colonial vestige Enforced military power in order to rule people</p>	<p>Not allowed to talk about the government or politics. Schools became the place for dreams of economic development, both for the family and the country reinforcing the mind-set of anti-Communism</p>	<p>Anti-Communism National growth (e.g. <i>5-year economic growth plan by president Park Jungle</i>)</p>	<p>Ideological conflict between the Left(communist party) and the Right(Democratic party) Conflicts in interpreting the experience of a former colony, divided by pro- and anti-Japanese perceptions⁸ Violation of human rights</p>
<p>Democratic government (President Kim Youngsam – present) Conservative -> Progressive -> Conservative</p>	<p>Became the member of the OECD in 1996 Financial crisis in 1997 (borrowing money from IMF) the first transformation of a political party in 1997 since South Korea embraced democracy – president Kim Daejung (Nobel Peace Prize)⁹ Election led to the Conservative regime in 2008 The increased population of so-</p>	<p>Schools had to juggle the demands of globalised neo-liberal values with the public mood for peace-oriented values school choice, standardization and global competition Deal with human rights, prejudice, discrimination, etc</p>	<p>Neo-liberalism Globalisation Multiculturalism</p>	<p>Preoccupied with raising economic standards and its own material development So-called <i>South-South conflict</i>¹¹ raised in terms of attitude to peace and reunification in the Korean peninsula Widened the gap between the haves and not-haves School violence and the increase rate of suicide</p>

⁸ Conflicts still rage within South Korean society over several historical issues, such as comfort women (the term is a euphemism for sexual slavery during the Second World War. Between 1932 and 1945), the number of whom ranged between 50,000 and 200,000. Korean comfort women are now asking the Japanese Government to apologize for what they did. The former comfort women gather every Wednesday in front of the Japanese Embassy waiting for an official apology. These days, the agreement made between South Korean government and Japanese Government is causing more social conflict because of undissembled apology made based on international political interests.

⁹ Kim fought for democracy during the period of dictatorship and therefore some people regard him as *left-wing* and suspect him of giving money to the North Koreans to pursue his *Sunshine policy* and the so-called *6.15 joint declaration*⁹. At all events, the mood of peace began to prevail in this period, and official perceptions of North Korea changed into a perception that co-existence was possible.

	called multicultural family ¹⁰			
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¹¹ This ideologically-based conflict even occurs within the ROK, as the *South-South conflict*. For instance, the epithet *Commie* or *Red* is still used among people in ROK to describe those who talk about DPRK in a friendly manner (Choi, 2003). Moreover, it is understood that peace and coexistence is a motto of the Left, while peace and security is its equivalent for the Right. This represents the ideological approach towards peace. A solid propaganda war on both sides aggravates all of this (Galtung, 1989; Kang and Kwon, 2011)

¹⁰ The definition of *multicultural family* is a family consisting of people with a different racial, ethnic and cultural background from ours (South Korean) (Cho, 2006). The multicultural phenomenon in South Korea derives from demographic changes from the flow of migrant workers and female marriage immigrants from South-east Asia, South Asia and China. As the number of these people grew and as they settled in South Korea through marriage and formed families, the government chose such families as a policy target group. Social concern over them increased and the government and media started to name them *multicultural families*, representing this multicultural phenomenon in South Korea.

Table 2. Overview of the research

Name of the school	Region (Socio-economic status)	Dates	Methods used	Number of participants (s: students/ t: teachers)
S high school	North-western Seoul (Mid-low)	Mar–Nov, 2012	Observation Interview Questionnaire	s: 120 (Interview: 33) t: 9
D middle school	North-eastern outskirts of Seoul (Low)	Sep – Dec, 2011	Observation Interview Questionnaire	s: 33 t: 1
Y girls' school	Middle of Seoul	June, 2012	Touring Questionnaire Casual interview	s: 60 t: 1
G high school	West of Seoul	April & July 2012	Participant observation Questionnaire	s: 30 t: 0

Table 3. Interview participants: teachers in S high school

Name	Sex	Length of work experience	Age	Subject
Bongsu Jo	M	25 years	Late 50s	Korean history
Samjae Lee	M	20 years	Mid 50s	Korean
Yuna Kim	F	8 years	Late 30s	Korean
Saechan Kang	M	1 year	Mid 30s	English (temporary contract)
Seoyoung Lee	F	20 years	Early 50s	Korean
Suchol Woo	M	20 years	Early 50s	English
Nanhee Yoo	F	20 years	Early 50s	Korean Literature
Injae Jung	F	1 year	Late 20s	English (temporary contract)
Wonro Lee	M	40 years	Early 60s	English

Table 4. Interview participants: pupils

Name	Sex	Age	Level of academic achievement	Category made by teachers ¹²
Mingi Kim	M	16	High	Excellent
Saeil Oh	M	16	High	Excellent
Dongsuk Kim	M	16	High	Excellent
Gyungmin Nam	F	16	High	Excellent
Hakyung Song	F	16	High	Excellent
Jonghyun Kim	M	16	Mid-high	Well-meaning but not excellent
Eunhye Gil	F	16	High	Well-meaning but not excellent
Gangjoo Lee	F	16	High	Well-meaning but not excellent
Minkyung Kim	F	16	Mid-high	Well-meaning but not excellent
Jiwoo Moon	M	16	Mid-high	Well-meaning but not excellent
Gaeun Oh	F	16	Middle	Well-meaning but not excellent
Nari Gae	F	16	Mid-low	Well-meaning but not excellent
Saegyung Kang	F	16	Mid-low	Well-meaning but not excellent
Gyuwhan Lee	M	16	High	Well-meaning but not excellent
Bomi Kim	F	16	High	Well-meaning but not excellent
Hyesun Shin	F	16	Mid-high	Well-meaning but not excellent
Dani Kim	F	16	High	Well-meaning but not excellent
Jihyun An	F	16	Mid-low	Well-meaning but not excellent
Hyesung Lee	F	16	Low	Troublemaker
Yoonji Lee	F	16	Low	Troublemaker
Haerim Kim	F	16	Middle	Troublemaker
Jungho Oh	M	16	Low	Troublemaker
Eegyung Lee	M	16	Low	Troublemaker
Sumi Choi	F	16	Low	Troublemaker
Dayoon Lee	F	16	Mid-low	Troublemaker
Jihoon Lee	M	16	Low	Troublemaker
Minju Choi	F	16	Low	Troublemaker
Giduck Byun	M	16	Low	Troublemaker
Jia Kim	F	16	Low	Troublemakers
Heebong Yeo	F	16	Low	Troublemakers
Sohee Park	F	16	Low	Troublemakers
Heungsoo Park	M	16	Mid-low	Troublemakers
Namsoon Go	M	16	Mid-low	Troublemaker
Youngwoo Im	M	16	Low	Special needs

¹² This division was made in the second analysis of the interview data in August 2013, based both on the first author's observations and on hints from teachers' interviews. The criteria were academic achievement, the location of students' seats and their self-categorizations conveyed in interviews. 'Excellent' means students who perform well in tests while 'well-meaning but not excellent' implies students who work very hard but their test results are poor. 'Troublemakers' are those who do not put effort into their study and show helpless behaviour as described ... (First author et al., 2017).

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